

# The Howard Collector

*Summer 1966*

8



#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Roundelay of the Roughneck* from *The Daniel Baker Collegian*, April 12, 1926.

*Alleys of Treachery* and *Age Comes to Rabelais* from the original mss; *The Shadow of Doom* from an original carbon.

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## EDITORIAL NOTES

No back issues of THE HOWARD COLLECTOR are available. Each issue now sells out shortly after publication, so readers desiring to obtain forthcoming issues are advised to order early.

The Dennis Dorgan stories, written under the Patrick Ervin pseudonym, are identical to the Sailor Steve Costigan series. Apparently Howard wrote the Dorgan series aimed at Magic Carpet for one story, "Alleys of Darkness", did appear in the last ( January 1934 ) issue and at least two others - "Sailor Dorgan and the Jade Monkey" and "Sailor Dorgan and the Turkish Menace" - had been accepted before the magazine's demise. To the best of my knowledge, he was never able to place any of the stories with another magazine.

John Taverel is a recently uncovered Howard pseudonym. It was used for his sole contribution to Ghost Stories, where Taverel was captioned "one of the greatest managers in the history of the fight game"! There was also a character named Taverel in Howard's story "The Children of the Night". Since it appears that "The Shadow of Doom" may have been written for the Ghost Stories market, I am publishing it under the Taverel by-line.

Harold Preece's letter is a forerunner of his memoir of Howard, to be entitled "The Last Celt", which will appear in the next issue.

Conan fans will be interested in knowing that an unfinished Conan story was recently located among some previously lost Howard papers, along with a synopsis of the

complete story as envisioned by Howard. L. Sprague de Camp has completed this story, following the synopsis, and it will appear in his anthology THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE SWORD, to be published this year by Pyramid. Previously untitled, the story will be titled "Drums of Tombalku".

The recent reissue of A GENT FROM BEAR CREEK ( Donald M. Grant, West Kingston, R. I. , \$4.00 ) is rapidly going out of print. Considering the modest price, the book is a bargain, with over 300 pages and a handsome format. The jacket design by Henry Eichner, depicting Brigamer the cougar after a tangle with Breck Elkins, is a delight. Seven previously uncollected Elkins tales will appear in THE PRIDE OF BEAR CREEK, a matching volume from the same publisher. This should be on the market by the time you read this.

## ALLEYS OF TREACHERY

BY PATRICK ERVIN

I'll never forget the night I fit Butch Corrigan in the Peaceful Haven A. C. on the Hong Kong water-front. Butch looked more like a gorilla than he did a human, and he fit the same way. It was a rough night for a sailor, even for Dennis Dorgan, A. B. In the third frame he biffed me so hard on the jaw I stuck my nose to the hilt in the resin and was still trying to pry it out when the bell saved me. In the fourth he knocked my head so far back betweenst my shoulders I could count the freckles on my own spine. In the fifth he throwed me through the ropes and one of his pals busted a bottle over my head as I clumb back into the ring. It was the bottle which made me lose my temper; and Butch being the nearest to me, I stuck my left mauler up to the elbow in his hairy belly and then cracked a meat-axe right on his ear whilst he was trying to get back his wind. He was already groggy from hammering my iron jaw and rock-ribbed belly, and that last clout which I unwound from my right heel, so plumb demoralized him that he fell down and forgot to get up till his henchmen dragged him outa the ring feet-first and throwed him into a horse trough to revive him.

Having been informed by the referee that the massacre was over, I groped my way to my dressing room, and after I had mopped the blood and sweat outa the eye that wasn't closed, I struggled into my clothes without the aid of my handlers which had decamped to join a crap game which was going on in the back alley. Then I headed for the office of Dutchy Tatterkin, the promoter of the Peaceful Haven, to get my dough, and as I emerged into the hallway who should I meet but Corrigan's manager, and he was frothing at the mouth.

"Where's Dutchy?" I ast him, and he let out a laugh

like a hyener with his tail in a wolf-trap.

"Where's Dutchy?" he hollered sourcastically. "I wish I knowed! He's skipped! Gone! Took a lam with the gate receipts!"

"What?" I bellered convulsively.

"Yeah! After all I've did for him!"

"But he can't do this to me!" I hollered desperately. "He owes me fifty bucks for lickin' your tramp tonight!"

"Your fifty!" said the manager fiercely. "What about me? Me, that's worked and slaved for my fighter, and spilt his blood in every third-rate arener from here to -- "

I left him telling his woes to the world and I run into the cubby-hole Dutchy'd used as a office. He wasn't there. What's more, it was plumb empty, didn't even have a desk or chair in it. It was so. Dutchy had pulled out for good whilst the fight was going on, leaving us suckers holding the bag. Me and Butch was each out fifty dollars. I accepted Butch's loss philosophically, but when I thought of my fifty I seen red. I run out on the street to look for Dutchy, though I knowed in all probability he'd already left on the night boat. But I was so mad I was ready to swim after him.

As I charged into the street I fell over a native boy and when I got up and started to cuss him out for being there, I seen it was a Malay which mopped floors and did odd jobs around the Peaceful Haven. He had a welt on his dome like somebody had socked him with a chair-laig.

"Where's Tatterkin?" I roared, laying hold of his collar.

"He gone," he said sullenly. "He no pay my wages; he say he give me chairs and desk in office to sell. But when I go find man to buyum, Tatterkin sellum heself. Hit me with club when I settumup holler."

"Well, where'd he go?" I yelled, unconsciously heaving him into the air and waving him like a flag.

"I tell you, he kill me," he said.

"You no tell me," I assured him, "I kick your pants up around your neck."

"He thief," he agreed. "I show you. You sockum, hey?"

Being too overcome by emotion for words, I merely ground my teeth, which seemed to satisfy him, because when I sot him down he started off at a run, and I follered him through a flock of twisty stinking dark alleys full of rats and smells, till he stopped behind a corner and pointed at a house right on the water-front which looked deserted till I seen a gleam of light through the shutters that covered a winder.

"Tatterkin there," he said. "You sockum. Me go."

And he did, light and quick as a ghost. I stayed there at the corner looking at that house.

My enemies says my brains is all in my fists, but none of them smart sissies could of done any quicker thinking than what I done right then. I knowed Tatterkin could of got out of port already if he'd wanted to. The fact that he hadn't showed he had some reason for staying; and the only reasons he ever had was crooked ones. The light glinting through them shutters was the only light anywhere around. The old tumble-down houses on all sides looked like they was plumb deserted. It was a peach of a setting for a murder.

So instead of follering my natural instinks and tearing down that alley like the bull of Basher to bust down the door, I snuck down slow along the side of a old ware-house and then ducked across the alley and crouched beside the winder. The shutters was over the winder, but the sash itself was up, as I could see through the cracks. Inside they was a oil lantern hanging from the ceiling, and I seen five men setting around a table drinking lickor and talking with their heads together -- five dark, ugly, scarred faces leaning clost to each other. I knowed 'em: one was the man I was looking for; the others was his pals -- scum like infests any sea-port in the Orient. They was Tom Kells, Jack Frankley, Bill McCoy, and a Chinaman named Ti Ying which I knowed dern well to be a river-pirate.



McCoy was saying: "You suppose Yut Ling would try to double-cross us?"

Frankley said: "What you mean, cross us? How could he?"

"Ten grand is a lot of dough," said McCoy. "He might bring a gang of hatchet-men and take the body without payin' us nothin'."

"Well," said Tom Kells, "Mike Grogan's prowlin' around out in the alleys. If he sees Yut Ling's bringin' a mob, he'll give us the signal and we'll be ready for 'em. Don't get jumpy. Yut Ling ain't due for a hour yet."

"Well," said Tatterkin, "me, I'll be glad when we're safe at sea. I pulled me a little chob tonight mineself which giffs me a hundred dollars, but it ain't worth a hundred to get busted on the chaw by such gorillas like Dennis Dorgan or Butch Corrigan. I was ready to close up mine fight club, and thought I might as well make a little extra profit for the last card, but I don't want to meet dem fellers."

"Aw, forget 'em," snorted McCoy. "Even if they knowed where you'd went, what could they do against all of us? What's botherin' me is that derved English dick, Sir Peter Brent. He's still in Hong Kong, lookin' for the Mandarin Ruby. You know when they arrested that Chinaman which stole it, they didn't get the ruby back. It's still lost. Brent's tryin' to recover it. The Chinaman wouldn't tell where he'd hid it."

"What I want to know," said Tatterkin, "is how you got so easy this feller in the back room. He looks like a smart vun."

"Aw," boasted Frankley, "that was easy. Just a little slick double-crossin'. When he offered to pay us to help him get Yut Ling, we made like we'd do it, whilst we secretly sent word to Yut Ling. Then we grabbed this fellow when he wasn't expectin' it, and tied him up, and there you are! Yut Ling offered more for his carcass than he was offerin' for Yut Ling's."

"Well, I wish it was done and we was gone," said

Tatterkin, pouring hisself a drink. "I don't like these old houses with nobody in 'em."

"Forget it," said Kells. "In an hour Yut Ling'll be here. We hands him that feller in the back room, he hands us ten grand, and then we're on our way to Australia with old Cap'n Sullivan. His old tub sails within an hour and a -- "

I was leaning with my ear against a crack to hear better, when wham! something butted into me from behind so hard my head went smash through the shutters and everybody in the room let out a startled yell and jumped up, and I heard Mike Grogan's voice hollering: "I got him, boys! It's this here cussed Dennis Dorgan!"

They bust into loud and terrible oaths and hollered: "Hold him, while we slam the winder on his neck!"

Which they done, three or four of them together, so enthusiastic the wooden frame busted all to pieces and bits of glass flew all over the floor. Now if they is anything that makes me mad it's to have a winder slammed down on my neck. I give a outraged beller and tore loose with pieces of winder-frame hanging around my neck, and hit Mike Grogan so hard on the jaw his shoe-laces busted. Then I clamped one arm around his neck and hauled him with me as I come surging through the winder disregarding the efforts of the defendants with beer bottles and chair-laigs. Their langwidge was something terrible.

Having arrived in their midst I let Grogan fall to the floor where he lay limply and was trompled on, and I commenced committing mayhem. And committing mayhem is the best thing I do. For a few minutes it was a kind of a whirlwind of fists and boots and bottles and chair-laigs, and the table splintering when the whole mob rolled onto it, all tangled up in a knot.

Presently I ariz out of the melee like Atrocious rising from the deep, with Dutchy Tatterkin by the neck.

"You rat!" I roared in righteous wrath, spitting out a

mouthful of blood and fixing my good eye on him with a awful glare. "Where at is my fifty bucks?"

"Tom!" he bellered. "Bill! Ti Ying! Mike! Jack! Help!"

Ti Ying and Grogan was in no condition to answer his squawk, being out cold. But McCoy responded to the call of the clan by rising suddenly behind me and smashing a table laig over my head. Tatterkin tripped me at the same time and I went down into the heap, but dragged Dutchy with me and the kick McCoy aimed at me caught him in the ribs and curled him up like a eel with the belly ache. Kells was feeling for my eye and he give a awful holler when I sunk my fangs to the hilt in his thumb, and then I riz with a tremenjus heave just in time to kick McCoy in the belly, and then Frankley come for me with a chair, and I ducked and butted him in the midriff so hard he crashed down on the floor with me on top of him, and Kells fell over us both.

And then the old rotten floor give way and we all crashed together into the cellar -- me, and the gang, and pieces of the floor and the ruins of the chairs and table and bottles and everything. I was lucky enough to land on top of two or three other birds, and that cushioned my fall, because we fell about ten feet. I struggled up before the rest of them eggs was up, because some of them had got their wind knocked out, or had hit their heads on something.

The light was still shining from the lantern hanging from the ceiling and I seen that if they had ever been any stairs in that cellar they had fell down long ago. The floor had give way on the side next to the door that led into the back room, and the only way to get out was to jump and grab the sill of that door and climb out that way.

Well, they was a scramble of human beings right under that door, and Bill McCoy was just getting to his feet, and still bent over. So I give a run and jump and landed in the middle of his back, and he couldn't give way under me because he was wedged in by the other fellers which was

tangled up under him.

So I give another big spring and caught the door sill and pulled myself up. McCoy was hollering something awful, and the others was moaning and cussing and yelling: "Help! Murder! I'm killed! My back is broke! What the hell is this anyway, a earthquake?"

I found me a chair near the door, and broke me a laig off, and whilst I was doing this, the gang discovered where they was, and they says: "#%&@\* the %¢#@\* luck! The \*&¢%# floor has busted and we have fell right into the #%&@\* cellar."

Tom Kells said: "Where is that cussed sailor? He must have fell in with us. I want to kill him before I die. He chawed my thumb nearly off."

"Blast your thumb," said Frankley. "He has busted all my ribs with his head, and before that he knocked out three of my teeth."

"You devils ain't hurt," groaned McCoy, lying on his belly in the mud. "Look at me! He jumped on my back just now, and nearly busted me in half. He ain't here. He got out."

"Help!" hollered Tatterkin. "A snake chust bit me!"

"That ain't no snake," snarled Frankley. "It ain't nothin' but rats. This old cellar is full of 'em."

"I want outa here!" Dutchy began to clamor. "It's wet and muddy. I bet water seeps in here. I bet it's full of water at high tide. I bet these rats has all got bubonic plague! Help!"

"Aw, shut up," said Frankley. "I'll stoop over and Tom can get on my shoulders and grab that door sill up there and climb out, and then get a rope and help us out. Good thing we got a light."

So they did, and just when Kells had hold of the sill I reached out and hit his fingers a awful swat with the chair-laig and he hollered bloody murder and fell back into the cellar on top of Frankley, and Frankley hollered: "Are you crazy, you #@%¢\* fool?"

"Shut up!" howled Kells, sucking his fingers. "That cussed sailor is up there with a club! He just broke all my fingers!"

Then they begun to holler and cuss something terrible, and I leaned over the sill and said: "Shut up, you #%&@\*s! I'm sick of listenin' to that there &#@¢%-x\*' profanity."

"Let us out, Dorgan," they said.

So I said: "Not till Dutchy there gives me that hundred bucks he held out on me and Corrigan."

Kells wiped the blood and mud and sweat offa his face and says to Dutchy, "Give it to him, for God's sake."

"I ain't got it!" Dutchy howled. "I've lost it!"

"You're a liar, you stubborn Dutch monkey," snarled Frankley. "Give it to him. You want us to lose ten grand by your stubbornness?"

But Tatterkin swore his roll must of fell outa his pocket when the floor give way, and they cussed him some more, and got to fighting amongst themselves, and Kells and Frankley beat Tatterkin into a jelly and tore most of his clothes off, looking for the dough, and when they didn't find it on him, they decided he must be telling the truth, and they started looking for it in the mud, and I sot beside the door-sill with my chair-laig waiting for them to find it.

Grogan come to and helped McCoy groan and them two done a noble job of it, and purty soon Ti Ying come too also, but he was still so dizzy he didn't seem to know where he was or what was going on. I had clouted him with a beautiful right hook on the button before the floor caved in.

Well, as I sot there listening to the impassioned langwidge going on in the cellar, I was aware of a bumping noise behind me, and turned around quick. They was three doors in that room: the door I was setting in; a side door that opened onto a alley; and a door which opened into a back room. The noise was coming from the back room. I seen that the thugs in the cellar was too busy to notice what I was doing, so I got up and went and opened that door.

They was a man in that room, tied up and gagged, and he was bumping his head on the floor like he was trying to attract my attention.

I untied him, and it was a Chinaman. Not no ordinary coolie, neither. He was a slender, keen-looking sort of a bird.

"Who the heck are you?" I demanded.

He said: "I am Soo Ong, a detective. I am working with Sir Peter Brent. Some months ago a valuable jewel known as the Mandarin's Ruby was stolen from a collection of rare stones. An innocent man, Ki Yang, was arrested and convicted on false evidence. I am trying to clear him and catch the real thief -- Yut Ling. These men promised to aid me, then they betrayed me, and intend selling me to Yut Ling, who will murder me because he knows I am the only man in the world who knows he is the real thief."

"You got no cause to be scared now," I assured him. "I'll help you!"

"Hey, Dorgan!" bawled Frankley from the cellar. "We can't find that cussed roll!"

"Keep lookin'!" I roared back.

Soo Ong was looking through a back winder into the alley behind the house. He beckoned to me. "You say you will aid me?" he said.

"I'll help anybody which is tryin' to catch a thief," I said.

"I need your help desperately now," he said. "Look through the crack here in the shutters. Do you see that man?"

It was dark in the alley, but I seen a man sneaking towards the house.

"He is a spy for Yut Ling," said Soo Ong, "come to see that everything is safe, before Yut Ling ventures here. He is too strong for me, and I have no weapon. Will you capture him for me? Do not injure him, but tie and gag him and leave him here in the back room. I will watch the cellar."



I said I would, and he went to the door sill, and when them thugs seen him they shut up sudden, like their throats was cut, only I could hear Tatterkin breathing like he was fixing to have the hystericals.

The man in the alley come straight to the winder I was watching at, and I'd already unfastened the shutters. He pulled 'em open easy-like and was just climbing over the sill when I grabbed his neck with my left and socked him on the jaw with my right. Before he come too I had him tied and gagged with the cords they'd had on Soo Ong. He was a white man, but dressed rough, and dirty and grimy like a waterfront tramp.

I went back to the sill, and nodded to Soo Ong, and he said to me, under his breath: "These vermin are not worth catching. If they are here when Yut Ling comes, their noise will frighten him away. Let us let them go."

"They can't go till they gimme a hundred bucks," I said stubbornly.

Frankley heard me and he said fiercely: "We can't find Dutchy's roll, blast you, and that was all the dough any of us had."

Soo Ong thought for a little, and then he said: "Ti Ying can come up."

So they boosted Ti Ying up, and I taken his knife away from him, and Soo Ong looked at Ti Ying, and Ti Ying started shivering. And Soo Ong said: "Give to this white man the bank-roll you took from Tatterkin's pocket."

Ti Ying turned green, but he hauled a wad out of his pants and give it to Soo Ong, and when them fellers in the cellar seen it, you oughta heard the holler they sent up.

"How come you didn't gimme this and get out sooner?" I demanded, and he shrugged his shoulders and said: "White men are fools. I knew you would let us out anyway, when you knew they could not find the money."

"When I get my hands on you -- " promised Tom Kells blood-thirstily.

Soo Ong peeled off a hundred and give it to me, and

give the rest, about three or four hundred dollars, back to Ti Ying.

"Let me go before the white devils get out!" begged Ti Ying, grabbing the dough, and Soo Ong said: "Go the back way!" and Ti Ying went like a jackrabbit.

Them in the cellar was frothing at the mouth. "Let us out!" they clamored. "You got the dough, and that dirty thief Ti Ying is gettin' away with all we got!"

"You can catch him, perhaps, if you are quick," said Soo Ong. "He went down the back alley."

So we let 'em out, one at a time, and they was no more fight in 'em, though Soo Ong was ready with Ti Ying's knife, and I had my chair laig. Each man, as we let him out, went tearing through the back room without even seeing the feller tied up in the corner, and legged it down the alley in the direction Ti Ying had run. The last man out was Dutchy Tatterkin. I hauled him out myself and frog-marched him to the door and lifted him through it on the toe of my boot.

"How come you knowed Ti Ying had picked Dutchy's pocket?" I ast.

"I know Ti Ying," said Soo Ong.

"But how come you give their dough back to him?" I ast further.

"So they would pursue him, and get themselves out of the way," he said. "Each man will try to catch Ti Ying and take the money from him before any of the others can get there -- and none will catch him. But none will be here to upset our plans when Yut Ling comes. He will be here soon. I overheard them talking."

Soo Ong said he'd come up the alley that run past the side door, from a direction different from the way Ti Ying and the others had run. He told me to wait in the back room, and he sot down cross-legged in front of the side-door, with Ti Ying's long slim ivory-handled knife in his hand.

We'd hardly got settled when I heard somebody stepping soft and easy out in the alley, and then come a cautious rap



on the door. Soo Ong riz and pulled the door open and stepped back into its shadder as he done so. A fat, smirking, sleek Chinaman come in at the door. He stopped short when Soo Ong stepped out from the shadders. He didn't move; his face just turned the color of a fish's belly. Soo Ong said: "Traitor!" -- and he sunk that knife to the hilt under Yut Ling's heart.

I come out all in a sweat. I hadn't expected nothing like that.

"What the hell!" I said. "That ain't the way detectives does things! Leastways, in America -- "

"Different methods for different lands," said Soo Ong. "But death to a traitor in any land." He stooped over and took a small leather case out of a inside pocket of Yut Ling's clothes. "I knew he would never trust it out of his own possession," muttered Soo Ong. "Even when coming among thieves who half-suspected his guilt." He took out a piece of paper and a pencil and scribbled on it in English, and wrapped the paper around the case and give it to me.

"Give this to the white man in the back room, and untie him," he said, and before I could say a word, he was gone into the night, and I was standing there alone with a Chinese corpse and a tied-up thug.

I begun to get a vague feeling that something was wrong about this deal. I got the jitters every time I looked at Yut Ling laying there with the knife hilt still standing up from his bosom. Finally I went into the back room and dragged the tied-up fellow out where they was more light, and pulled off the gag. And the first thing he said nearly knocked me down.

"You rotter!" he said. "You'll get life for this!"

"What?" I said. And my hair riz straight up, because I recognized him, under his make-up of old clothes and grime.

"Pete Brent!" I gulped. "The limey dick!"

"Sir Peter Brent to you," he snarled. "Dorgan, I never

thought I'd find you mixed up in a murder!"

"I never killed that Chineese!" I growled.

"I know," he said. "I heard what was going on. But you -- "

"But I nothin'!" I grunted, untying him. "I was just helpin' that detective, Soo Ong -- "

"Detective?" he sneered. "Do you take me for a fool? Are you pretending you don't know that was Ki Yang, the man who stole the Mandarin Ruby?"

"What?" I hollered. "But he said Yut Ling stole it -- "

"That's what he said at the trial," snapped Sir Peter. "He swore Yut Ling was the real thief, and had framed him, but there was nothing to back up his accusations. Yut Ling was a sort of stool-pigeon for the police -- unsavory character, but necessary. If he knew Ki Yang was here, it's a wonder he hadn't tipped me off. I've been looking for Ki Yang ever since he escaped from prison a week ago. Just struck his trail tonight. He might have gotten clean away, but it was characteristic that he should lurk around to get revenge on Yut Ling, poor devil."

"Yut Ling didn't wanta tip you off," I said. "He was goin' to give a gang of white thugs ten grand for capturin' Ki Yang and handin' him over to him, so he could bump him off."

"You're either crazy or drunk," said Sir Peter, getting up.

"I ain't neither," I said, nettled. "Suppose Yut Ling was the man which stole the ruby? It's worth a lot more'n ten grand. Suppose Yut Ling knowed Ki Yang knowed he stole it? Maybe he'd figure it was worth ten grand to have Ki Yang outa the way for good."

"Ridiculous," snorted Sir Peter. "You can't make a fool out of me with any such nightmare-story. The fact remains that Ki Yang murdered Yut Ling, and you were an accomplice. You'll have to -- "

"You ain't goin' to arrest me," I roared. "Don't reach for your gun. I taken it offa you when I socked you. I ain't

goin' to the jug just because I made a mistake. I thought Ki Yang was a detective, and that I was aidin' the law. Maybe I been made a fool of, but I ain't goin' to do time, you hear me? I'm goin' out that door and I don't want you to try to stop me. Before I go, though, here's somethin' Ki Yang said give you. He taken it offa Yut Ling after he killed him. There's a note, too."

Sir Peter grabbed it, and read the note out loud. It said: "Sir Peter Brent: An innocent man can not prove his innocence in prison. Guile must be fought with guile. I can not prove that Yut Ling stole the ruby; but the gem can speak for itself. This white man, whom I tricked into helping me, thinking I was a detective, can attest the fact that it came from the pockets of Yut Ling. Your obedient servant, Ki Yang."

"Well, I'll be damned!" said Sir Peter, and he ripped open the leather case, and a flaming red stone as big as a pigeon egg rolled into his hand. "Then Yut Ling was the thief! The rat! Well -- his killing is one homicide that will never be brought into the courts, if I can help it. Dorgan, I apologize. It's evident that you did make merely an honest mistake, and in so doing aided justice. The case is at an end; the jewel will go back to the owner, the real thief has been punished -- if illegally -- and an innocent man vindicated. You've done a good night's work!"

"Aw," I said modestly, "that ain't nothin'. But I got to go and find Butch Corrigan now. I got fifty dollars which belongs to him, and if it hadn't been for me, he wouldn't never of got it. Butch ain't smart like me!"

# I SPEAK OF SHATTERED SPRING

( A Chant for Robert Ervin Howard )

BY DALE HARDING EXUM

His eagle's ache for sky,  
His thirst to thrust at God,  
Had set his youth to cry  
On trails by most untrod,  
A sun-mad man outcast.

With lost outsider's wail,  
With woes and loves uncried,  
Half-angel was he: pale.  
By hellish-heavens tried,  
He passed each hour, aghast

At figures on its face  
That hinted brilliant dooms,  
His heart: a restless place  
Of hurting hopes and tombs  
Where old weak ones had passed.

Uncanny chaos thing  
In love for sky and sun!  
He spoke his shattered spring  
Into an art begun --  
And things of nowhere classed.

## AGE COMES TO RABELAIS

BY ROBERT E. HOWARD

Judas Iscariot, Saul and Cain,

Pharoah and Jezebel --

Is it lost away, the blind black strain

That stabbed me cold with a blinding pain,

That carried me up to the spires of Spain

And down to the halls of Hell?

Winter is tinting the skies with steel,

The air is slashed with wine.

I should be looting strange gems from mire,

Ripping the stars with a blasting fire --

But the soul is gone from the looted lyre

And the song from the heart of mine.

## ROUNDELAY OF THE ROUGHNECK

BY ROBERT E. HOWARD

Let others croon of lovers' moon,  
Of roses, birds on wing,  
Maidens, the waltz's dreamy tune --  
Of strong thewed deeds I sing.

Let poets seek the tinted reek,  
Perfume of ladies gay,  
Of winds of wild outlands I speak,  
The lash of far sea spray.

Of drear swamp brakes, of storm whipped lakes,  
Dank jungle, reedy fen,  
Of seas that pound the plunging strakes,  
Of men and deeds of men.

Prospector; king of battling ring;  
Tarred slave of tide's behests,  
Monarchs of muscle shall I sing,  
Lords of the hairy chests.

Though some may stay 'neath cities away,  
To toil with maul and hod,  
To outer trails most take their way,  
To lands yet scarcely trod.

The torrent's might, the dizzy height,  
Shall never bate their breath,  
With desert's toils they match their might,  
And hurl their mocks at Death.

The tropic creek, the jungle reek  
That steams through sullen trees,  
The boding wild where leopards shriek  
Holds never fear for these.

Nor do they shrink from hell's own brink,  
When kites low wheeling fly,  
And circling near the jackals slink,  
And sands stretch bare to sky.

Far swing their trails through calms and gales,  
From Polar sea to Horn,  
From bleak ice-glittering peaks and vales,  
To sun-kissed seas of morn.

In driving snow, where arctic floe,  
Surges through ice-reft straits  
Where bergs sweep southward, row on row,  
And ice fiends shriek their hates.

Where the broad sun smiles on a hundred isles  
With the long sea reach between,  
And the lone gull wheels for a thousand miles,  
And the reefs lift fanged and lean.

On Polar trails where the screeching gales,  
Bellow and roar and blow  
And the skies are gone while the fierce wind rails,  
And the path fades in the snow.

By atolls lean where ships careen,  
In the sullen, still lagoon.  
And crouching bushman's spear is a sheen  
In the light of the shuddering moon.

In the marshy swamp, in the jungle damp,  
Tall trees in marching lines  
Echo again to the tusker's tramp,  
Where the tiger glides through the vines.

On mountains bleak, on cliff and peak,  
From Pole and Pole to Line,  
Adventure still they ever seek,  
Adventure still they find.



LETTER

Robert E. Howard to  
Harold Preece,  
postmarked September 23, 1928

Salaam:

The tang of winter is in the air and in the brain of me. Old age comes upon me prematurely, like a mist from the cold sea and deep and dreary in the gulfs of my soul stir old ghosts of dreams. For the love of winter is not upon me and the desire moves in me ever for green trees and grass bursting in jade tides up through the pulsing sod. And the love of slow lazy rivers in on me, and leaf gowned branches bending close to their bosoms; and warm winds and blazing stars when the nights are still and the good lush earth caresses young careless limbs with her warmth.

Ochone ochone -- what glory in the grey rain and the slanting sleet, the sullen ice and the brooding north winds of winter, what splendor? I have risen at dawn and gazed at the nodding grass and each blade was a flaming gem in the morn-fired dew. When the cold winds come and the sleet is sharp in the air, when the fogs drift grey and the frost is white, the desire of me wings south and the song of the wild geese is a threnody which shatters my brittle heart with fierce longing.

Oh seas and ghosts of seas beneath the Southern Cross. I have sailed them in my dreams and in my dreams I have raced springy thewed and brown limbed along the wide white beaches between the palm trees and the lazy surf, my arms outstretched for a laughing, golden skinned nymph with a flaming hibiscus in her flying hair. I have climbed the leafy greenfastnesses of the dreaming mysterious hills, high and ever higher where the silence broods like a sleeping god, and standing against the topaz sky, I have seen the coiling green seas spread beneath me from horizon to horizon and the distant white sails that hung against the sky-line like a splash of white flame on a sapphire girdle.

Dreams, and dreams and the ghosts of dreams.

Why should I dream of lazy islands dreaming on the surging jade breast of the deeps? Should my dreams follow the lines of my ancestry as men say, I would only dream of rocky hills and mesquite flats shimmering in the sun; of flat valley bottom plantations where sweating negroes sang beneath the lash; of the wild barren wind swept wastes of Galway's coasts; of a wilder and more brooding land of icy cliffs and sullen harbors.

Last night I was drunk but there seems to be no especial hangover this morning. I am writing this some time after I wrote the first. I went to Brownwood for the week-end last week, rode with a stranger, beat my way as usual and under the influence of beer got voluble. I'll swear, I have to be partly lit before I can enjoy the company of the average bird though I can usually talk to anybody about anything, whether I am interested or not. Clyde, Truett and I went over to Clyde's uncle's ranch and there, some miles from civilization, we sported hither and yon clad in innocence, purity and a loin cloth apiece -- there being caves to explore and cliffs to climb. I guess I'll wind up in the South Seas yet and go native.

I have just received the July and September Juntos. I enjoyed very much your article in the latter and was disappointed to note that you had nothing in the July number. I agree with Truett as stated in his "Hell Bent" that the younger generation or degeneration as they might be called, is bound for -- not an orthodox Hell, the existence of which I deny -- but stagnation, ruin, and utter futility and worthlessness. With the new knowledge and freedom which they possess, they might be giants but they choose to be instead, parasites, drones and degenerates. Damn them all; and that includes myself.

Last night I was drunk. I fail to find any reason for or against that drunk. There was no need in it, also there was no reason why I should not have drunk.

I simply enjoyed an hour or two of dizzy mazziness and

then retired and slept it off. I wasted no time thereby that I might have employed usefully otherwise, nor did I spend any money. On the other hand, there was no special reason for doing so, nor did I gain anything by it. I have concluded that the ordinary drunk is entirely too commonplace a thing to give much thought to, either for or against -- I mean an ordinary drunk such as I was on last night. It comes under the class of reading a book, seeing a show or kissing a girl. Merely one of the every day phases of life, not to be denounced nor glorified. Had I, while drunk, knocked some man down or written a masterpiece, then the drunk would have taken on more significance -- as it is, I waste time in even remembering the affair. Now, is that sophistry?

If Booth tangles with the godly college rulers and gets the bounce I can't see how that will hurt him any. I don't see how they could teach anything to a lad who is already farther advanced than they ever will be. What does Booth intend to make of himself or has he any set plans? You said Orus was his brother I believe -- he writes good stuff. Does he try to sell any of it? Notice the mercenary touch -- I can't help it -- it's a professional complex, I reckon.

I had such a damnably peculiar dream last night while sleeping off my drunk that I am moved to inflict it on you, in part at least. I had sunk low in the world, so low that I was scrubbing floors for my living. My companions were a woman of young middle age, a huge female; and a rather pretty girl. All of us were scrubbing floors and it seemed that the girl was of a high and wealthy family but had been kicked out because of something which I forget. Now I was a slum rat if there ever was one -- a hard, gnarled fellow, who talked out of the side of my mouth in the patois of the Bowery. I was myself and yet not myself.

I concocted the scheme of kidnapping the girl -- all the success depended on whether her family still cared enough for her to save her life. She had grown hard too, and she,

the woman and I formulated the plan. She wished to bring into it her lover who had remained faithful to her throughout all her vicissitudes of fortune and he came with two friends. And oh Hell, he was the most stupid looking scut I ever saw. He was tall, six three or four I should say, with an abnormally large mouth and a sappy stare. I sat and shot my instructions at him until his face got on my nerves and I snarled: "Get that damn face outa my way before I bust it! You got the crummiest lookin' front of any bastard I ever saw. Here, you look like you got some sabe, listen close to me." This last to one of the friends as the lover stepped back abashed. The idea was to take the girl off in a motor boat to some island -- we must have been in a sea coast town -- and then send word to her family to come across with the cash -- a thousand dollars, which we'd all split between us. But the girl and I had planned to cross the rest and beat it with the swag only she wanted to work her stupid lover in on the deal.

Then, the next thing the scene had changed incredibly. We were the same gang but it was the latter part of the middle ages or later. There were three of us out on some wild and barren rocks just off a rugged coast. The girl, bound hand and foot, the lover and myself. The man and I were dressed in close breeches of deer skin, feathered hats and other apparel of that time, the girl in long flowing garments. A boat floated by the rocks and some disagreement had come up between us -- he had bound the girl and was about to beat it with the money or something. I came leaping down across the rocks toward him and we fired simultaneously with flintlock pistols and my ball knocked his gun from his hand. Then we closed with cutlasses and the sparks flew until both blades broke short at the same time and I knocked him cold with a left swing to the chin. Then the dream faded, but how strange -- I had regained my lost youth in the second scene and was no longer a slum rat.

# CONVERSATION ON THE BRIDGE

## A PLAY IN ONE ACT

BY TEVIS CLYDE SMITH

CHARACTERS: Fear Dunn  
Fear Finn

TIME: 1928

SCENE: A concrete bridge over a small creek which flows past the edge of the business district in a Central Texas city of some 18,000 people. The approach to the bridge is lined with commercial establishments, consisting of two poultry houses, a garage, a blacksmith shop, a radiator shop and a secondhand clothing store. The scene is lighted by a lamp which hangs above the center of the street, one block from the bridge. This gives enough light to show that the business section thins out on the other side with only one small residence and a gin mill visible in that direction. In the background, over the trees, and across the creek, are the lights from part of the city. Overhead, the stars shine like jewels in a cold, clear sky.

As the curtain rises, two men walk past the garage toward center stage. Both wear overcoats and caps in addition to their other clothing. The overcoat collars are pulled up around their ears and each man has his hands in his pockets. As they pass under the electric sign advertising the garage, with its admonition "Don't Cuss, Call Us", a tramp, hidden in the garage doorway steps out

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toward the men. There is a short, inaudible conversation. The two companions hand the tramp a few coins and point in the direction of the main part of town. The tramp moves on and the two men walk on to the bridge. One of them is brownheaded and the other is a blonde. The brownhaired man appears to be about twenty-two years old and the blonde man is about twenty. The brownhaired man speaks:

FEAR DUNN: What a hell of a night, with no place to go. The four bits we gave him will get him into some cheap hotel, unless he spends it for Jake. He probably will. From that shuffling gait, I'll bet he's syphilitic.

FEAR FINN: Probably. He was pretty mangy looking. Odd how running across somebody like that affects you. I'm already itching. I hope a crab didn't jump off his carcass. I've heard of them getting in a tramp's eyebrows, and a sign I ran across in a filling station crapper the other day boasted: "No use to stand upon the seat, because our crabs can jump six feet." So we got within leaping distance. ( He moves toward the railing and leans against it with his left elbow. FEAR DUNN moves also, and stands against the rail. )

FEAR FINN continues to speak: The thermometer at the drugstore said 9 above. This must have been about the kind of cold Stevenson had in mind when he wrote A LODGING FOR THE NIGHT.

FEAR DUNN: I forget how cold it was, but it was probably about like this, and it looks wild enough down there along the creek for wolves.

FEAR FINN: Well, tell me, are you having any luck? Or is it the same old story -- rejection slips?

FEAR DUNN: There are too many of them -- and, if I sell



anything, I'm often forced to rewrite it three or four times.

FEAR FINN: That gets old.

( At this moment an orange colored tomcat, singing a plaintive love song, starts across the bridge. Suddenly the subdued song changes into a pained cry. )

FEAR DUNN: Well, we know what he's after. I didn't think anybody, or anything, but John Everelldown worried about that on a night like this.

FEAR FINN: By the way, how's Scrap? See a cat and think of a dog, you know.

FEAR DUNN: Doing good -- and he's as kind as ever. He's been around for years and has never so much as implied that he is better than I am. He has never corrected me about my manners. He doesn't know anything about man's inhumanity to man. ( Pauses for a moment and then continues ) Well, humanity will probably destroy itself. In a case of that kind, it ought to leave a good world for the animals, the kind of world in which they will be able to enjoy themselves. That's something.

FEAR FINN: Well, the papers are full of the yellow peril.

FEAR DUNN: Yeh, this year's no different from the last few. They're short on airplanes and the next war will be decided by air. We're sure to fight Japan. We may go to war with Germany, too, but we'll be at war with Japan first. We may fight England, too. The whole world hates us.

FEAR FINN: Well, we might as well get ready to shoulder a musket.

FEAR DUNN: Before we do, let's go by the bake shop and pound on the door and buy some tarts and cream puffs. I'm

cold, and my belly's empty, and the bakery should have something ready for the morning trade by now.

FEAR FINN: You're right. I'm hungry, too, and it's too cold to stand still long.

( They turn and move toward the right wing )

CURTAIN



LETTER

Harold Preece to Glenn Lord,  
dated January 11, 1966

Dear Glenn:

Thank you very much for the latest issue of The Howard Collector with those long ago letters of mine. They will give me some source material that I need for "The Last Celt" since I was trying to remember what was said in one of them - including the Gaelic spelling of Booth Mooney's name.

Until not many years ago, I still had pictures of Truett and Clyde and Bob and myself taken in Brownwood. They got mildewed in a barn where I had a lot of stuff stored during a moving around period.

Bob's influence on my Celtica has been very pronounced so that my Texas folk tales sometimes have a Celtic bent. One editor compared them in a comment on a piece titled "The Wolf Called Nightingale" to those that Yeats has done about ancient Ireland. Eventually, I hope to get them altogether for a collection to be styled THE WOLF CALLED NIGHTINGALE AND OTHERS, with due tribute paid to Bob in an introduction.

Sprague de Camp made one mistake in one compilation whose title I can't remember from having lost the book. I was not the only "professional" writer Bob ever knew -- in fact most of my output at that time was for the Lone Scout amateur publications, and I first knew Bob and Truett through a Lone Scout contact.

Bob did know the Texas poet, Lexie Dean Robertson of Rising Star, not far from Cross Plains. I don't know whether she is still living or whether she and Bob had any correspondence. I met her once briefly at a meeting of the Texas Folklore Society in Fort Worth during 1937 -- and went to a party of her friends in that city after a session.

Yet the personal impact of Bob Howard has to be defined in terms of the total influence of that whole little Brownwood group on me and on the work I would do later -- Truett Vinson, Clyde Smith, Gladys Brannan, Ottie and Mary Gill. They were my very first intellectual circle anywhere: I have deep, affectionate recollections of each and all of them as well as of Bob's cousin, Maxine Ervin, whom I met at TCU before I'd ever heard of Bob. I happened to mention Maxine when I met Bob and Truett for the first time at the Stephen F. Austin Hotel in Austin town during the summer of 1927. Maxine and her sister, Lesta, later became my friends in Dallas and were two of the genuine Texas ladies I've known over a lifetime. Originally, they were from Big Spring where their father had been a pioneer newspaperman.

I recall writing Maxine about having met Bob following that meeting in Austin. She wrote back that Bob could easily be a Tristan, though this is not my conception of him now. I can't define him as being anybody except Robert Ervin Howard and that was very much.

I always liked, particularly, an impish quality of writers that Bob personified. I can remember, that night after Clyde Smith had graduated from Howard Payne College in Brownwood ( 1929 ). Those two devils celebrated by repeated dives on a childrens' slide in a local park, with Truett and myself being their audience.

In my opinion, The Junto published some of Bob's best work and it had an interesting history. Booth Mooney, then a boy in Decatur, Texas, wanted to issue a "travelogue" sort of publication passed by mail from one reader to another. He asked me to come up with a name. I suggested Junto after Benjamin Franklin's claue in Philadelphia, and helped give Booth a mailing list which included Truett, Bob, Clyde and Maxine, who was of a much more conservative bent than most of the readers and contributors.

After some months, Booth got weary of the job. Following an interval my sister, Lenore Preece, revived The

Junto. Bob was a regular contributor and probably the most talented. Truett, Clyde and Maxine also wrote for it as did Hillary Daihl, an Irish girl and correspondent of mine in Pontiac, Michigan -- one or two of her poems had real merit.

Spiritually, I could hope that The Junto meant something to Bob who had the innate loneliness of most writers -- he often spent weeks in Brownwood so that he might have the stimulating influence of his little crowd there. When magazine checks were late -- as they sometimes are for any writer -- he could always depend on Truett for a loan. I know, at one time, that Weird Tales owed Bob around \$1100. But he wouldn't drop it out of loyalty to a publication which had made him a rather noted author.

But to get back to The Junto. I feel that it gave Bob a specialized, intimate, if small, sort of audience that he needed. Most of its readers were rebellious young intellectuals in that epoch of the depression. Bob's fire and spirit symbolized all sorts of protests -- expressed and inchoate -- that we felt, though, only in a very limited sense was he any kind of political rebel nor at all any sort of slogan shouter or cliché monger. He might have related a little bit to Bakunin -- not at all to Marx.

The Junto became a casualty of the depression and of Lenore's heavy college schedule. Nor did a proposed gathering of Junto readers ever materialize. Its following consequently disintegrated for not having that sometimes symphonic little journal as a core. Perhaps our last point of unity was an announcement, received from Truett, long after its suspension about Bob's tragic, sudden death and a suggestion that we all try to pool funds for a collection of our friend's best work.

But during that long period when America was just pulling out of Mr. Hoover's dismal quadrennium, few of us had any money to pool.

So I can be very happy that you are now Bob's literary executor -- that his work has not died with him.

Finally, in a just and long overdue tribute, it was Bob and sister Lenore who were two of the first three people to encourage me to try at being a professional writer. The third was May Kemp Henson, my English instructor at TCU -- a lovely girl who thought that I didn't have what it took to be a preacher. She was right.

Eventually, I shall write the autobiography which several publishers have suggested. A whole sequence of four or five chapters will have to be devoted to the Brownwood bunch -- and to Bob and Lenore. May all the gods of the Gael be good to them all.

Faithfully,

Harold

TO ROBERT ERVIN HOWARD

BY WADE WELLMAN

Alas, the thread of life, not nearly spun,  
Has clipped before its time; the pulsing fire  
That spurred your soul with thunder, sword, and lyre  
Has flickered out. The blasting of the gun  
That spoke for Kane, the savage desert sun  
That gleamed on Spanish treasures, -- fables dire  
Were swept away by grief, which built your pyre  
And crushed your life before the heights were won.

Had you but lived beyond the night I came  
Into this sullen world, when tramping feet  
Plunged all of Europe down the path of war!  
My heart had known a brother in the street,  
And sensed the vapor of your spirit's flame;  
But you had gone away, three years before.

-- June 24, 1964

# THE SHADOW OF DOOM

BY JOHN TAVEREL

Some ten years ago I was walking down a street in San Antonio with a casual friend of mine, John Harker. We were both young working men of very limited means and we had become acquainted with each other because of the fact that we shared the same cheap boarding house.

It was late, nearly midnight. We sauntered along, talking, when suddenly John halted and I saw his face whiten. He was staring at a house across the street. We were in a rather second rate neighborhood and this house was a rambling, two story structure, evidently a boarding house. Downstairs a single light burned in the hall but upstairs all was dark. Evidently the occupants had all retired. But John stood gazing with horror depicted on his face.

"My God, Steve!" he cried, "I've just seen a shocking murder!"

"What!" I exclaimed.

"I tell you, yes!" he cried. "That window there -- there was a light in it when I turned my head, and just as I looked, it was turned out. But in that flash I saw a terrible sight! The figure of a man crumpled up on the bed, all bloody -- and headless!"

I cried out in horror.

"Get a policeman!" he shouted, and ran across the street to the front door of the house, while I ran down the street looking for a cop. I found one around the corner and brought him back on the run. We found my friend engaged in a hot argument with the sleepy landlady, who was inclined to drive him out again, but at the sight of the policeman, she wilted.

"I tell you," cried John, "there has been a fearful murder just committed in this house! The murderer may

still be in the building!" He swiftly narrated what he had seen and the landlady turned pale.

"Come on, show us the room," said the policeman and we mounted the stair.

John stopped before a door, saying, "I'm certain this is the room."

"But that room hasn't been occupied for two months," said the landlady.

"No matter," said the policeman. "Open the door."

The landlady produced a key and the door was opened. The policeman had drawn his gun, and we all braced ourselves for some terrible sight -- but the room was empty. Nothing was there, living or dead. No stains showed on the bed or the floor. We looked at John Harker curiously. He was completely nonplussed and seemed dazed.

"I tell you," he cried, "I saw it as plain as I see you people now! The bed clothes had been turned down just as if the man had started to go to bed. He was sitting on the side of the bed, his body crumpled down on his knees and his arms hanging limply, just exactly as if he had been sitting on the bed preparing to undress when he was struck dead. And I tell you, his head had been cut off!"

"You got the horrors, young man," said the policeman. "Too much liquor. Delirium tremens. Run along now, or I'll lock you up."

There was nothing else to do so we went, followed by a few acid remarks from the disgusted landlady. On the street John swore bewilderedly.

"I must be going crazy. I saw it as plain as day! He'd taken his coat off, for he was in his shirt sleeves. I could even tell that he was wearing a striped shirt and blue serge trousers. The most horrible feeling came over me as I looked -- oh, well, I guess it was just a hallucination."

Harker soon after this left the boarding house where I was staying and I lost track of him. Some months later I met him accidentally and we laughed over his "murder"



again.

"By the way," he said, "I'm staying at that house now, in the very room I saw that sight -- or thought I saw it."

As he said that a sudden ghastly thrill struck me, but I said nothing.

Then the strange sequel occurred. I found myself walking along that same street one night, and as I went I suddenly remembered that on that very night, exactly a year ago, Harker and I had had that strange experience. I glanced at my watch and saw that the time was the same, almost to the minute. I was now even with the house and I glanced involuntarily across the street. I halted short. There had been a light in the window but as I looked it went out. But I had a flashing impression of a figure huddled strangely on the edge of the bed, and it seemed to me that it was horribly red.

I hesitated. Was this hallucination? Should I go on? I took a single step then made up my mind. I ran across the street and knocked on the door. The same sleepy, disgruntled landlady answered my knock and inquired my business. I merely said I wished to see my friend, John Harker, and she went upstairs with me, unwillingly, to show me his room.

I knocked, with a cold fear at my heart but there was no answer. I flung the door open and turned on the light. The landlady screamed and fainted. I fell back against the wall and the room swam to my gaze. The bed clothes on the single bed were turned back, and there slumped down with his chest fallen on his knees, sat or rather lay the body of John Harker. As in a daze I took in the striped shirt, the blue serge trousers, all horribly drenched with blood -- and the ghastly red stump of the neck. In the middle of the floor lay John Harker's head, the dead eyes staring, the dead lips writhed in a frightful grin of agony. A side window opening on a roof showed how the murderer had come and gone.

And the murderer was not long at large. He was soon



captured, a maniac who had escaped from the large asylum there in the city. When captured he told in his ravings how he had come across the roofs and seen his victim sitting on the side of the bed, preparing to undress. He told how he had stolen through the open window and had decapitated the young man with a single blow of a great meat cleaver he had obtained somehow. Death had struck so suddenly that the victim had not even had time to rise. His head flew from his shoulders and the body slumped down on his knees, the arms trailing loosely. At that moment I had chanced to glance up at the lighted window, just an instant before the maniac turned out the light and fled.

Well, as the saying is "Coming events cast their shadows before" and little poor Harker thought that when he saw that strange scene a year before, that he was looking at the shadow of his own doom.

It was a ghastly experience and one which I am unable to explain. But even now the sight of a lighted window late at night makes me shudder and I dare not look into it, for fear of what I might see.

IN PREPARATION —

## THE PRIDE OF BEAR CREEK

*by*

ROBERT E. HOWARD

Contents:

THE RIOT AT COUGAR PAW  
PILGRIMS TO THE PECOS  
HIGH HORSE RAMPAGE  
THE APACHE MOUNTAIN WAR  
PISTOL POLITICS  
THE CONQUERIN' HERO OF THE HUMBOLTS  
A RINGTAILED TORNADO

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All fled — all done, so lift me on the pyre:  
The Feast is over and the lamps expire.

